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774 the mind and soul of the individual inhabiting a body which is exactly like the fleshy body except that it is composed of much more tenuous matter. It preserves a certain detachment from the physical body even during life. It leaves the body during sleep, unconsciousness or insanity, and dreams and hallucinations are its actual experiences. It may also leave the body when the person is awake and sane, and may stay away for days or even weeks. The mind and body continue to function during its absence, but with reduced vigor, and if it stays away too long, the body dies. The natives cannot explain the inconsistency between this belief and the belief that the *ambiroa* and mind are inseparable. Apparently they have not analyzed their beliefs that far.

There is no connection between the *ambiroa* and the shadow. *Ambiroa* of both the dead and living are often seen. They look exactly like the person but usually appear at a little distance and fade away if approached. Those of the living do not speak, but those of the dead sometimes do, counseling people or demanding sacrifices. *Ambiroa* of the living are seen most frequently when the person is ill, or when he is away from home and longing to return. They have no special significance and are not a sign of approaching death. *Ambiroa* of the dead appear most frequently in deserted villages, near tombs, or in lonely places. They are not dangerous unless offended and do not seem to be particularly feared, although such meetings are never sought by the living. I asked one informant whether it was a good or bad omen to encounter the *ambiroa* of a deceased relative and he answered emphatically: "A bad omen! He will ask you to sacrifice an ox to him."

The *ambiroa* of the living frequently meet and talk with the *ambiroa* of the dead in dreams, returning to their bodies with a memory of the encounter. This may also occur in trances. It is most frequent in the case of *ombiasy*, some of whom claim to be constantly directed in this way.

When the *ambiroa* is absent from the conscious body it goes to the place of the ancestors, just as if its body were dead, but when it returns all memory of its sojourn among them is effaced. A person whose *ambiroa* has left him is said to be *mitoitraloka*. It must be recalled as soon as possible, for if it is allowed to remain with the ancestors too long it will build a house and plant rice fields in the spirit world and will refuse to return. When an *ombiasy* has diagnosed a disease as being due to the absence of the *ambiroa*, a sort of mush is prepared by pounding and boiling a small wild grain. The

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sufferer squats on the floor with the pot of steaming mush between his feet and covers himself completely with a *lamba*, inhaling as much of the steam as possible and taking a small sweat bath. When the mush has cooled he eats it. After this, his *ambiroa* will return. Maladies due to this seem to be fairly common and are often diagnosed and treated without calling in an *ombiasy*. If the sickness recurs frequently a charm against it may be worn.

The *ambiroa* leaves the body once for all in incurable insanity and at death. Apparently there is no idea that the insane are possessed. Their actions are due to the *aina*, which continues to function in the absence of the *ambiroa*. If they are quiet and peaceful, their needs are provided for, but if they are troublesome, violent, or appear to be in pain, they are killed as quickly and painlessly as possible. If a corpse revives after the funeral ceremonies are well under way, its movements are also thought to be due to the *aina*, and it is quietly strangled.

With a few exceptions, to be noted later, all *ambiroa* have the same fate after death. Ethical conduct while alive does not affect this, except that a person who has been formally disowned, a notorious sorcerer, or a man of extremely evil life, may be rejected by the spirits of his ancestors and refused a place in their village. Such souls become vagabonds, working evil upon the living and hanging about at sacrifices to intercept the good souls and seduce them into injuring their descendants. In some sacrificial rituals the ancestral spirits are asked to return to their village as soon as they have eaten and to be careful not to talk to any of these vagabonds whom they may meet on the way.

Souls who have been accepted by the ancestors live in villages and carry on an existence exactly like that while alive. They have their chiefs, marry, have children, build houses, plant rice and raise cattle, go on journeys, etc. When bodies are to be moved to a new tomb, the dead are given several days' notice with an admonition to pack their baggage and recall any of their number who are away. Their state is thought to be somewhat more felicitous than that of the living, but they are not exempt from troubles and even sickness. In one ritual the souls are requested to take a share of the offering to any of their number who may be absent through illness. Each soul has exactly the same form as its body at the time of death, even to mutilations and deformities.

The location of the spirit villages is not clear in the native mind. Several informants said that the *ambiroa* lived on Mount Ambon-

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illness or before beginning the activity in which supernatural aid is hoped for, but are usually made after help has been received, in fulfilment of a vow.

Vows are called *tsikafara*. To make a vow is *manovava* and to fulfil one *manalavava*. A vow may be made by any one at any time or place in case of sudden danger or other emergency, but deliberate vows, especially those for the cure of illness, seem usually to be made by the village priest at the head of the sick person's bed. An ox is given to the priest by the person or his family after his recovery. Most vows are made publicly, the people of the village being called on to witness them. In the vow, the nature of the sacrifice, as a black ox, is specified and often the place where it will be performed, but there seems to be no fixed formula. All vows are rigidly fulfilled, for failure in this would result in the death of the individual and possibly the wiping out of his entire family by the enraged spirits.

Although all Tanala sacrifices conform to a general pattern there seems to be an almost infinite variation in details. Each gens has its own invocation and even different lineages within a gens may have peculiarities of procedure. From accounts of participants it seems that even two sacrifices performed by the same priest for the same purpose are rarely identical at all points. These individual variations are not due to carelessness, or to a poor development of ritual, but reflect a feeling that the circumstances surrounding two sacrifices are never the same. In approaching the gods and ancestors the workings of fate must also be considered. Each day has its special significance, with favorable and unfavorable aspects (see *Vintana*, pp. 212–214) and each individual has a particular destiny. These must be taken into account to obtain results, and it is for this reason that *ombiasy* are consulted as to the best place, day and exact procedure for each sacrifice. The methods used by the *ombiasy* in determining these details are known only to themselves and the priests follow their directions blindly.

In most of the Menabe gentes the sacrificial procedure is as follows: The place of sacrifice may be indicated in a vow; if not, it is chosen by an *ombiasy*. Most sacrifices are performed at the *ampiseofana*, the village sacred place, where the memorial stones to the ancestors have been erected (see Erection of Memorial Stones). These stones are set up in pairs, a flat slab resting on a tripod of small stones, called the *vato vavy* ("female stone") and a tall upright stone called the *vato lahy* ("male stone"). The *vato lahy* is erected

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It is thought that the souls of such persons reside in their memorial stones. The suppliant approaches the stone and slaps it several times with his open hand, to awaken the spirit. If he does this properly, his request is sure to be granted. He then says: "Listen, listen, so-and-so. I am going on a journey [giving details of his route, etc.]. If I come back safe and the trip is a success, I will bring here and sacrifice to you so much honey [or snuff, rum, etc.]." When the prayer has been granted, the vower makes the offering himself, with no ceremony except a second awakening of the spirit and a brief announcement. 782 769

OMBIASY

The term *ombiasy* signifies a medicine-man or magician. The Menabe recognize two main classes, *ombiasy manangatra* and *ombiasy mpsikidy*. The latter are divided into *ombiasy ndolo* and *ombiasy nkazo*. All the types of *ombiasy* include both men and women. Men are more numerous, but some of the most famous are women. 756 791

The *ombiasy manangatra* are spiritualist mediums. They are usually marked by some slight mental or nervous abnormality. No special training is required and they begin practicing as soon as they become conscious of their powers. Their main activity is the discovery of the cause of illness and the means for curing it. Informants thought that they might be appealed to in other matters, but could give no instances. 756

Seances are held in the *ombiasy's* house, always at night. The *ombiasy* spreads a mat in the northeast corner of the house, placing on it a bottle of rum and certain charms. He sits beside it or lies on it. Sometimes both *ombiasy* and mat are covered with a tent-like mosquito net of raffia cloth. This tent is about 5 feet high and comes down to the floor, giving complete concealment. The sick person and his relatives seat themselves on the floor, apparently without any fixed order, and the fire and all lights are extinguished. The people begin clapping and singing softly. After a time a knocking is heard on the walls, or voices are heard repeating: "We have come. We have come." There are sometimes as many as ten or twelve spirits, distinguishable by their different voices. The voices are nasal and seem to come from the east or west of the *ombiasy*, sometimes high, sometimes low, but never far from him. The head of the family, or the sick person, then tells the spirits why they have been called. After this the *ombiasy* explains the situation fully and 755 787

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755 the spirits tell the cause of the illness and the medicine to be given,
767 always speaking. If the sick person is not present, the *ombiasy* tells the spirits to go and look at him, and he will be conscious of cold hands touching him all over. After answering the questions, the spirits drink the rum, dance and sing. The dancing and singing are accompanied by rhythmic rappings on the floor and walls, but always near the *ombiasy*. If a great deal of rum has been provided the spirits may pass it around to the living after they have drunk all they wish. If there is a doubter present they will seize his wrist when he reaches out for the cup. Finally they say they are tired and must go, and troop off noisily. The spirits are the souls of ancestors, but no individuals can be identified.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of this belief is the large number of natives who are, or have been, skeptical as to the authenticity of the phenomena. I found this quite common among persons who had had little or no contact with outsiders and am convinced that it is not due to European influence. It is reflected in the general attitude toward the *ombiasy manenpetra*, who rank far below the *ombiasy mpikidy* in popular estimation. Several informants declared flatly that the seances were faked and that the *ombiasy* produced the voices, etc., himself. Others had been skeptical, but had been convinced by personal knowledge of cures or by having felt the spirit hands during seances. The stories told by the latter were curiously similar to our own spiritualists' accounts of ectoplasm. They said that the hands of the spirits were strong but so soft that they seemed boneless and that their flesh was moist, excessively cold, and had a different texture from human skin.

767 Within the last twenty-five or thirty years another type of *ombiasy manenpetra* has come into existence. At one end of most Tanala houses there is a shelf or partial ceiling which forms a dark loft about 8 feet deep and 6 feet above the floor. The practitioner places a mat here with charms on it and the spirits come and rest on it. The spirits whistle or make cheeping noises when persons enter the house. If the intruder is frightened or runs away the *ombiasy* reassures him and tells him that it is only the spirits asking who has come. He puts questions to them and interprets their whistling answers. They are present both day and night. Apparently *ombiasy ndolo* are beginning to adopt this trick. It is said to be of foreign
[177] origin but I know of nothing like it among the neighboring tribes. Intelligent natives are even more skeptical of it than of the regular seances.

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competition. There is usually only one *ombiasy* in a village and never more than two. I could learn of no case in which two *ombiasy* had pitted themselves against each other, at least publicly. 791

Even in the old days of constant intertribal warfare there were a few foreign *ombiasy* operating among the Tanala. Most of these belonged to the Antaimorona tribe, which still enjoys a great reputation for magic. They are said to have been responsible for the introduction of a regular calendar of lucky and unlucky days. The foreigners were looked up to and could command higher fees for both services and instruction than the native trained men. They were especially in demand when a new village was to be founded. By similar reasoning, Tanala *ombiasy* who had settled among the Betsileo were thought superior by that tribe. 791 177

ACTIVITIES OF THE OMBIASY

DIVINATION

Divination is probably the most important of all the *ombiasy's* activities, for it is the prerequisite for nearly all the others. By means of it the *ombiasy* discovers the cause of illness, the hazards which will attend a journey or business enterprise, the chances of a person in love, etc., and deduces which remedy or charm will prove most effective under the circumstances. 787 755

The Tanala word for divination of all sorts is *sikidy*, a term applied to both the process and the mechanical means used. The Ikongo practice three forms, divination by water, divination by sand, and divination by seeds. The Menabe say that only divination by seeds is native and very few of their *ombiasy* know any other form. Haruspication is altogether lacking and there is no real divination from the flight of birds, etc., although certain acts of birds and animals are considered ominous.

Divination by water is rare and has apparently been borrowed from the southeast coast tribes in very recent times. Water is put in a clear glass bottle, shaken vigorously and then held up and examined. Some practitioners do not look directly at the bottle but study its reflection in a small mirror. The answer is deduced from the movement of the water, its cloudiness, the way in which sediment collects, etc. Apparently each practitioner has his own rules.

In divination by sand, a thin layer of dry sand, usually black, is spread smoothly over a wooden tray. The operator makes marks at random with a small stick, or his finger, and studies the resulting patterns. I was unable to learn the rules, but suspect that it has a

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787 755 definite arithmetical basis. It is a rare form and has been borrowed from the southeast coast tribes. These tribes probably borrowed it from the Arabs, whose influence is strong there.

Divination by seeds is by far the commonest and is known to all *ombiasy*. There are two forms, one relatively simple, which the Tanala claim is aboriginal, and one complex. The latter is unquestionably of Arab origin. It is commonly used by the Ikongo, but few Menabe *ombiasy* are familiar with it.

In the simpler form of seed divination, the seeds of a tree called *rahiaka* are used. These seeds are about 5/8 inch long by 3/8 inch wide. The color is a medium brown and they acquire a high polish with use. There are usually about fifty seeds in a set, although it is forbidden for the *ombiasy* ever to count them or know the exact number. They are kept in a small bag, or a little bottle-shaped basket with a long neck and a cap-like cover (Fig. 23, b). The top of the cover is often woven in the shape of a hand or in some other fanciful form. Rarely the seeds are kept in a small gourd or a wooden box similar to those for fire making sets. A quartz crystal and a piece of *hazomanga* wood are always kept in the basket with the seeds and some *ombiasy* add other objects as well. The crystal is believed to make the *sikidy* see more clearly, while the *hazomanga* strengthens it and is also used in divination for sickness.

In divining, the *ombiasy* pours out the seeds in a pile on a mat and mixes them gently with his hands, repeating the following invocation: "Arise up, *Alanana*. [This is an archaic Tanala name for this form of divination. It is no longer used except in the ritual.] While you were on the tree you were not eaten by the lemurs and on the ground you were not devoured by the wild boars. You are the son of the sister of *Zanahary*. I am the son of the sister of man. You sleep in a basket and I sleep on a mat. Your dreams are not my dreams and my dreams are not your dreams. Rise, a sick person has come. Say what is the cause of the evil."

After this, the *ombiasy* takes a handful of seeds at random and begins to take the seeds away in groups of three. The remainder, one, two or three seeds, is laid in a pile on the mat. The process is then repeated and the next remainder laid to the right of the first. This continues until eight piles have been laid out in a row. The *ombiasy* then takes the crystal and lays it between the fourth and fifth piles, with its long axis at right angles to the row. He then begins a new row, laying the first pile below pile 8 and continuing to the left until sixteen piles have been made.

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When the figure has been completed, the sick person stands or sits facing the east and holds out his hands side by side, the palms upward and slightly cupped. The *ombiasy* scrapes dust from the *hazomanga* into his hands, or pours into them water with which the dust has been mixed. The person then prays: "Oh *Zanahary*, I beg pardon of you with both hands, holding the *hazomanga*. Be so good as to pardon me and cure me, for I ask this of you with the *hazomanga* in my hands." After this the *ombiasy* interprets the figure. A relative may act as proxy if the sick person is unable to be present.

Each of the sixteen positions in the figure has a name and significance, as follows:

1. *Taley*: "First" or "head," represents the head of the family.
2. *Mady*: "Wealth" or "medicine," sense of something good.
3. *Fahatelo*: "Third," significance of a relative of the sick person.
4. *Bilady*: "Land," "country," or "native place."
5. *Fiarahana*: "Children."
6. *Abidy*: "Old woman."
7. *Betsimisaka*: "Wife."
8. *Fahavalo*: "Enemy," also used in the sense of the illness.
9. *Fahasiny*: "Ancestors."
10. *Ombiasy*: The person who has made the *sikidy*.
11. *Hasa*: "Food."
12. *Andriamanitra* (or *Zanahary*): "God."
13. *Sholiana*: "Very old person."
14. *Shady*: "Young person."
15. *Safary*: "Road" or "journey."
16. *Trano*: "House," also used in sense of home or dwelling.

The number of seeds in each pile is also significant. One seed is called *Tarsky* ("one only"). It indicates weakness. Two seeds are *Asimbola*, name of a month. This is the most favorable arrangement. Three seeds are *Alakarabo*, also the name of a month. It indicates strength but also that there will be difficulties.

In interpreting the *sikidy* one position is taken as representing the person on whose behalf the divination is made. If it is a man, this position will be *Taley* (1); if a woman, *Betsimisaka* (7); if an old woman, *Abidy* (6); if a child, *Fiarahana* (5), etc. The *ombiasy* observes the number of seeds in this position, then deduces the result from this and from the other positions in which the same number of seeds occur.

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Let us suppose that a sick man has come to ask the cause and cure of his illness and the figure has come out as follows:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
○○	○○	○	○	○	○○	○	○○
16	**15**	**14**	**13**	**12**	**11**	**10**	**9**
○○	○○○	○	○○○	○	○○○	○○	○

Taley (1) is taken as the key. The number of seeds in this position is *Animbola*, a favorable sign indicating that the cure will not be difficult. The same sign occurs in the positions *Mody* ("medicine"), *Abidy* ("old woman"), *Fahavalo* ("enemy"), *Ombiasy* ("doctor"), and *Trano* ("house"). The arrangement would be interpreted to mean that the sickness has been caused by an old woman who is an enemy and has secreted a charm in the house. It can be cured by medicine administered by the *ombiasy*. The interpretation is always by a similar association of ideas. If seeds of the same number as the key appear in a position which seems to have no bearing on the question, they may be ignored.

In the more complicated seed *sikidy* any sort of grain may be used. After an invocation, which was not obtained, the operator takes a handful of the seeds and draws them aside two at a time, putting the remainder (one or two) in the upper right hand corner of a square figure. He repeats this until he has made a vertical line of four places, then begins another vertical line to the left of the first and continues until there are four lines. The completed figure contains eight lines, four vertical and four horizontal.

The arrangement of seeds in each line has a special significance. There are sixteen possible groupings of combinations of one and two in four places. These groupings are arranged in four divisions which are known as *trano* (lit. "houses"). Each *trano* is named after one of the cardinal points.

THE FOUR TRANO

EAST

1	2	3
○○	○○	○○
○	○○	○
○	○	○○
○○	○	○○

WEST

1	2	3	4	5
○○	○○	○	○	○○
○	○	○○	○○	○○
○○	○	○○	○	○○
○	○	○	○	○

NORTH

1	2	3	4
○	○	○	○○
○○	○○	○	○○
○	○○	○	○
○○	○○	○○	○○

SOUTH

1	2	3	4
○○	○	○	○
○○	○	○	○
○○	○	○○	○○
○○	○	○○	○

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755 787 The names and meanings of the figures in the divisions are as follows:

EASTERN TRANO, *Tantinana*

1. *Alitsimoe.*—This sign has power to keep in their place enemies or robbers. It is a strong agent.
2. *Dabora.*—Significance same as above, but less strong.
3. *Alahamora.*—Significance same as above, but it is feeble and a sign of decadence.

WESTERN TRANO, *Tahandrefana*

1. *Alahotse.*—Sign of coolness or good health. It is also called *sikidy mainty* ("cool sikidy"). It is always favorable.
2. *Alikoey.*—Sign of death or other great evil. If the *sikidy* is made for an illness, the sick person will die.
3. *Alakola.*—Sign of a sickness called *hanem-boky*, caused by eating food offered by a married person who has committed adultery. The stomach swells. To cure it the guilty one confesses and draws a vertical line on the victim's stomach with white earth.
4. *Anakarabo.*—Sign of cries of pleasure or joy or of an illness called *birike*, which makes one weep. (This sign was formerly counted as 4 in the eastern *trano*, but was ill-treated and changed to the western *trano*. Some practitioners still place it in the eastern *trano*. In that house it is feeble and a sign of decadence.)
5. *Alikisy.*—Sign of good news. An enemy has been defeated, a girl will accept you as lover, etc.

NORTHERN TRANO, *Avaratrase*

1. *Adala.*—Sign of glory or that one will occupy a place of honor.
2. *Alimia.*—Foretells the possession of many oxen or other wealth, or indicates that one will be honored by the king.
3. *Karija.*—A very good sign. One will get everything one wants.
4. *Alikoso.*—Sign that one will be protected from ghosts.

SOUTHERN TRANO, *Atsimotse*

1. *Atsimbola.*—Sign of alarm and burning.
2. *Tarake.*—Sign that one is loved by women and has fallen into complete indolence.
3. *Alakaraky.*—Sign of the hunt. One will kill game or succeed in enterprises.
4. *Alikasy.*—Sign of a slave, also of a short alarm, or a combat which begins and ends suddenly.

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The position of each line in the figure also has a special significance. Let us suppose that the following figure has been formed: 787 755

The meaning of the position is as follows:

1. Earth.
2. Brother.
3. Goods or wealth.
4. Chief (represents the person for whom divination is made).
5. Child.
6. Servant or slave.
7. Woman.
8. Enemy.

The arrangements in the horizontals are read from left to right.

In interpreting the figure position 4 is taken as the key. The significance of the arrangement is first noted by the *ombiasy* and then the figure is consulted to see whether the same arrangement occurs in any other position. If so, this position will be of the greatest importance. If there is no agreement of this sort, as in the example given, one notes the arrangements which fall in the same *trano* as the arrangement in the key position. In this case the arrangement in the key position is *Alakaosy*, No. 3 in the southern *trano*. The only other arrangement belonging to the same *trano* is *Alikosy* (No. 4) which occurs in horizontal 5. The figure reads "successful hunt" in the key position and "slave" or "short combat" in the child position. This will be interpreted by the *ombiasy* in the light of the question. The signs are neither very good nor very bad.

After the first reading, a second figure is formed as follows: Two arrangements are compared place by place. If the sum of the seeds in the two places is even, two seeds are put in this place in the new row. If the sum is odd, one seed is put in the place. Thus:

In the new figure there are eight groupings. The example shown here is derived from the figure previously given.

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11	13	12	17	14	16	15	18
○	○○	○	○	○	○	○○	○○
○	○○	○	○○	○	○○	○	○
○	○○	○	○○	○○	○○	○○	○○
○○	○○	○○	○	○○	○	○	○

The new groupings are formed by combining the original groupings as follows:

Groups in positions			7	and	8	give group in position			11
"	"	"	5	"	6	"	"	"	12
"	"	"	11	"	12	"	"	"	13
"	"	"	1	"	2	"	"	"	14
"	"	"	3	"	4	"	"	"	15
"	"	"	14	"	15	"	"	"	16
"	"	"	13	"	16	"	"	"	17
"	"	"	17	"	4	"	"	"	18

The positions in the new figure have the following meanings:

11. Spirit or ghost.
12. Food.
13. *Ombiasy* (the practitioner himself).
14. Father.
15. Road.
16. Mother, or reunion.
17. God.
18. House or home.

The new figure is compared with the *trano* given by position 4 in the original figure and groupings not in this *trano* are ignored. In the example only one position and grouping are significant: *Asimbola* (1 in south *trano*), which means alarm or burning. It occurs in position 13, representing the practitioner. It reinforces the "short combat" significance of the grouping in position 5 in the original figure.

Interpretation is by association of ideas. Apparently there is some variation in the practice of different *ombiasy*. Although the names of the groupings are always the same, the significances may vary somewhat. The methods of combining to give the second figure are also somewhat variable. In most of the tribes which use this method these features appear to be stereotyped and I suspect that the Tanala variations are due to an imperfect knowledge of the system.

DETERMINATION OF LUCKY AND UNLUCKY DAYS

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One of the main duties of the *ombiasy* is to determine propitious days for sacrifices, the commencement of enterprises, etc. The

777 784 out at the time. The owner of an *ody vary* (charm to promote the growth of rice) has two *fady:* to throw out the burned rice from the bottom of a cooking pot instead of eating it and to arrange the hair while in the rice field. The owner of an *ody tolona* (charm for wrestling) must not eat mashed manioc, which would make the muscles soft. The owner of an *ody omby* (cattle charm) must abstain from boiled taro leaves for the same reason. The charm against scorpions (*ody hala*), the contents of which have already been described, has three *fady* associated with it. The owner must never kill scorpions, pick up live coals or a brand from the fire with his hands, or eat the fruit of the *lofika* vine unless he has peeled it himself with his teeth. *Ody tembote* (for curing illness) have a great variety of *fady* varying with the nature of the complaint.

If the owner of a charm breaks its *fady*, the charm immediately loses all power. He must take white earth and make a spot with it in the middle of his forehead and on either cheek. The power of the charm then returns.

A person usually acquires the benefits of a charm by simply wearing it or keeping it in his house, at the same time observing the *fady*, but there are a few charms which require an inoculation, like [755] that already described for the scorpion charm. When an *ody fôlaka* (a charm for skill in curing fractures) is bought, an incision is made in the heel of the purchaser's right hand and a little of the medicine rubbed in. Part of a charm to make blow-gun arrows deadly also consists in splitting the lip and inserting a little of the medicine. Apparently these were the only charms with inoculation in ancient times, but some forty years ago an Imerina slave who was very expert in bull baiting introduced a charm for that purpose which required it and it is now sometimes used with charms against lightning, *ody tandraka*, in imitation of the Imerina practice.

All charms must be treated with respect and must not be handled more than is necessary. Especial pains are taken to keep them out of the way of children, for if they play with them injuries may result. [754] Charms for working evil, such as killing enemies, etc., are especially dangerous and it is thought unsafe to keep them in the house.

[432] Charms can be sold without ceremony either by their makers or by persons who have themselves bought them. The transfer is complete and there is no danger to the seller. On the other hand, it is dangerous to discard a charm, for this offends it and it may turn its powers against its owner. To prevent this, the owner takes a fungus called *olotafina*, grates it on a stone and puts some of the

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621 787 777 the path. That at Ambohimanga, the former capital of the Tanala Menabe, was made from various leaves buried in the earth. Over this a large-leaved plant, also called the *kovavy*, was planted. Each year the top of the plant was cut off and the bark scraped from the stump for 2 or 3 inches below. The right ear of an ox was cut and blood from it rubbed on the stump. Leaves were plucked from the plant, pounded, and mixed with water which was given to the ox to drink. The ox was the property of the village *ombiasy* and the same one was used each year. After this inoculation the ox was turned loose in the forest. The ox was restless, wandering constantly, and whenever he crossed the trail of an enemy coming to attack the village he would begin bellowing and would come at once to the *kovavy* and stand there bellowing. The direction from which he came showed that from which the enemy was coming and the villagers would have time to prepare for the attack.

777 342 In addition to the types of charms just outlined there were charms to bless houses and bring fortune to their inhabitants. These were buried on the site before the house was built.

825 777 The crocodiles in the Manandriana River were rendered innocuous by a charm thrown into the river long ago. The *fady* for this charm was that in crossing the river one must paddle with a spade or axe instead of a regular paddle and that one must not wash a *lamba mena* ("shroud") in it. So long as these rules were observed the crocodiles did no damage, but they have been ignored since the coming of the French, with the result that crocodiles now carry off domestic animals, although they still do not attack people.

The native name for charms in general is *tamango*, *mohara* or *ody*, the terms being used interchangeably.

HEALING

755 One of the principal duties of the *ombiasy* is healing. When a person becomes ill he goes to the *ombiasy*, or sends for him, and pays an advance fee of 1.20 to 1.50 francs, arranging at the same time for a larger fee to be paid after the cure. The *ombiasy* makes the *sikidy* to learn the cause of the illness and prescribes from his knowledge, or, if the case is not clear, makes the *sikidy* a second time to find the remedy. The remedy is usually a mixture of herbs, compounded as a charm. Part of the charm is put in water. The sick person drinks some of this and bathes his whole body with the rest. Another part of the medicine is done up in a little cloth bag and worn around the patient's neck. There is always a *fady* which the patient

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must observe. If the patient dies, the *ombiasy* does not receive the final fee, but he retains the initial fee and is not punished, except by loss of prestige. In case of an epidemic the *ombiasy* gives protective medicine to everyone in the village. 755

As a rule the *ombiasy* is only applied to in serious cases. In every village there are old people of both sexes who treat minor ailments without any pretensions to magic. These practitioners use herb remedies, for the most part, and some of their medicines possess real value. Inflammation is relieved by cupping. The operator makes a small incision in the skin, places the tip of a horn over it, and exhausts the air by suction. The small end of the horn is covered with a lump of soft wax and when the vacuum has been formed this is pressed together with the tongue, sealing the opening (Fig. 23, h). The horn is left on until the suction has filled it with blood. Boils and abscesses are never lanced, but may be poulticed to bring them to a head. Fractures are treated by the *ombiasy* or by persons having a special charm for the purpose. In some cases the art seems to be hereditary in families. A decoction is made by boiling the leaves of various plants in water, or they are pounded and mixed with grease, and the limb is rubbed with this. The bone is set and the limb placed in leaves with a heavy bandage. No splints are used. 757

SLEIGHT OF HAND

The Tanala *ombiasy* make comparatively little use of sleight of hand. The idea that illness is due to some foreign body which has been thrown into the afflicted person seems to be lacking, so there is little reason to exercise it. However, some practitioners use sleight of hand to show their powers and impress their clientele. A Tanala *ombiasy* resident among the Betsileo staged an exhibition for me as follows: He spread a new mat on the floor and placed upon it two large bowls, one empty, the other filled with water. Beside these he laid a club made from half of a sawfish's saw. This, he said, was a sort of magician's wand. Anyone struck by it would die. For the exhibition, it simply increased the power of the other charms. When these objects had been arranged, he drew from his waistcloth a charm made from sticks of wood packed into the hollow of a small horn. He placed this, large end down, in the dish of water and allowed it to steep for about ten minutes. He then removed it and placed it in the dry bowl. After this, he asked me to give him something that he could chew up and swallow. I offered him a piece of ordinary paper about three inches square. He steeped this in the water for a short time, then folded it and pressed it to the

789 [753] 756

[See category 116, p. 205 - analyst]

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at once. The Zafindiamanana have no charms to prevent possession and say that no permanent cure is possible. 158 787

The *salamanga sakalava* is always possessed by a known ancestral spirit. In many cases he is a regular practitioner who can throw himself into the *salamanga* state at will. The Zafindiamanana seem to use the terms *salamanga sakalava* and *ombiasy ndolo* as synonymous, although in other gentes the latter term has a different significance (see *Ombiasy*). However, they rate such persons below the regular *ombiasy* and say that the profession is dangerous, often leading to insanity. 756 829

The *salamanga sakalava* seems to occupy himself mainly with curing diseases. The situation is explained to him before the seizure comes on. During the attack he behaves like the ordinary *salamanga*, but if he runs to water at the onset of the possession he will dive to the bottom and bring up something from it. This will be the medicine for the malady. After he has been brought back, and while he is dancing, his spirit will answer questions or declare the cause and cure of the sickness. Finally, he is cured with *hazomanga* water, like the regular *salamanga*. 756

Among the Manandriana the ideas and practices connected with the *salamanga* are much more elaborate. They call the ordinary *salamanga* (without messages) *bilo*. It manifests itself by violent twitchings and a compulsion to dance. It may attack people while they are asleep or seriously ill in bed. It may also be brought on by eating the first of the new rice or maize at harvest time. Sometimes, apparently, the *ombiasy* diagnoses an illness as *bilo* when the ordinary symptoms are lacking. When the attack commences the *ombiasy* ("medicine-man") employs the *sikidy* ("divination") to discover what sort it is. There are three varieties, *andiha*, *andamalama* and *evobola*, which are the same in symptoms but differ in treatment. Apparently the real difference lies in the strength and obstinacy of the possessing spirit, but Raindranaivo remarked cynically that rich people were usually possessed by the *andiha*, which required the longest and most expensive ceremony. 753 755

The cure of *salamanga andiha* is as follows: A bed in the form of a stretcher is hung from the roof of the house in such a position that its edge will be against the north side of the center post and its head east. Directly over the ordinary fireplace another fireplace is made. This is a platform raised on four posts about 2 feet high and covered with a mat. On the mat is a square enclosure of boards full of earth in which stone tripods for two pots are planted. One tripod 755

755 is used for cooking meat, the other for cooking rice and brewing herb medicine. The *salamanga* lies on the raised bed and all his food must be cooked on the raised fireplace. The reason is that the possessing spirit is important and high, so everything must be elevated. To the center post of the house is tied a plant of red sugar cane, a banana plant which has not yet borne fruit, branches of the *fatakala* and *sily* and some other plants. A decoction of herbs, brewed on the fireplace, is put in a drinking horn with a silver bracelet hooked over the edge and this is tied to the bottom of the post. The *salamanga* lies on the bed until about three o'clock in the afternoon when he is given an *evoka* ("steam bath"). Plants selected by the *ombiasy* are boiled in a pot and when the steam is thick the pot is thrust under the bed or the *salamanga* crouches with it between his knees. Man and pot are covered with many *lamba* ("mantles") so that he can inhale the vapor and sweat. After he has sweated the *ombiasy* paints him with alternate stripes of red, black and white, employing earth colors and charcoal. The forehead, breast and back are striped vertically, with cross stripes on the arms. The *salamanga* formerly went bare to the waist but now, if a woman, a *lamba* is worn just high enough to cover the breasts. Several of the family's most valuable *lamba* are wrapped around the patient's waist and, if a woman, she wears all the family jewelry. Both sexes wear a peculiar hat of matting which has a hole in the top (Fig. 23, j) and usually carry a staff. In some cases the *salamanga* is too sick to dance and some relative whom the *sikidy* ("divination") shows to be suitable takes his place. The *ombiasy* paints both, putting stripes of the same color on one and the other alternately. The substitute does not take the steam bath or eat the special food.

The *salamanga* leaves the house at sunset and dances until about eight o'clock while all the people clap and sing to help him. He then goes back into the house and is fed and put to bed. In the morning he dances again from about nine to ten o'clock. If, after several days, there are not enough people to clap and sing for him he cuts the night performance short. While he is dancing a woman who bears a fortunate name takes the horn containing the medicine and asperges him with it from time to time, using a sort of brush made from the *abita* plant. This is so that he will dance strongly and work off the *salamanga*.

The *salamanga* is expected to feed all the people who help him. When word goes out that a rich person is afflicted in this way neighboring villages send messengers offering to come in a body and help

on a certain day. The relatives fix days for each village, usually two or three days apart. When there are many people the *salamanga* dances all day until three or four o'clock, then does not dance at night. During the dancing other persons who have been *salamanga* are likely to be seized again, but asperging them with the medicine in the horn is enough to cure them.

The dancing continues a week or more, the time depending on the wealth of the *salamanga* and the seriousness of the attack. The last day of the ceremony is called *langonana biavy* or "the woman's day," although men also take part. A little house, so small that the *salamanga* will have to crouch in it, has been built just at the edge of running water. All the plants which have been fastened to the center post of the house are brought down to it. The *salamanga* is conducted to the river by all the people, singing, clapping and dancing as violently as possible. He enters the little house and the *ombiasy* asperges him with medicine from the horn. When he has done this a woman called the *vady ombiasy* (lit. "wife of the *ombiasy*," although she is actually only his assistant) sets fire to the house. The *salamanga* leaps out and plunges into the water, diving seven times downstream and six times upstream. The *ombiasy* then rubs him with the rest of the medicine from the horn, washing off the paint, and paints white spots on his forehead and both cheeks. The banana and sugar cane plants are planted on the site of the burned house and it is afterward *fady* ("taboo") for the *salamanga* to eat their fruit, although others can. The people return quietly to the village and the sufferer is cured.

The *salamanga andamalama* has a mat bed made in the same place as the stretcher bed of the *salamanga andiha*. The eastern end of it is built up so that the head is high and the body on a slant. His food is cooked on the ordinary fireplace. The rest of the paraphernalia and ceremony are the same, but the latter is somewhat shortened.

The *salamanga evobola* has no special bed or fireplace. He dances only on the first night, but longer than the others, usually from sunset to nine or ten o'clock. On the other days he simply takes the *evoka* ("steam bath"). The steam baths seem to be the essential feature of this variety of *salamanga* for its name, *evobola*, signifies the silver steam bath. This is simply an honorific term for the bath and no silver is actually put in the boiling mixture. At the end of the period the *salamanga evobola* bathes in his own house with water containing medicine.

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755 787 The *salamanga menabe* is a form of possession by an ancestral spirit. The spirit speaks through the person possessed and prophesies coming misfortunes to the entire group such as pestilence, floods or the attack of an enemy. The *menabe* carries a staff with which he points out where bad *ody* ("charms") are hidden. During the seizure he is "like an *ombiasy*" ("medicine-man") but the state cannot be induced and he is not consulted regularly. A peculiarity of this form is that no one may wear a hat while the *menabe* is dancing. If he sees a person wearing one he tries to take it off and, failing in this, falls unconscious. He is revived by drinking and being asperged with water containing medicine.

158 828 The *salamanga sakalava* is rare and occurs only in the north. It is also due to possession by an ancestral spirit, but the possessed does not prophesy. The movements are the most violent of all and the victim vomits blood. This is caught and carefully kept, for if any of it falls on the ground the victim will die at once. Informants did not know the method of cure for this variety.